

## October 23, 2009 - Great Allegheny Passage Generates over \$40 million in Annual Spending

Greensburg, PA – October 23, 2009 – The Trail Town Program, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, and the Allegheny Trail Alliance are pleased to announce the results of the 2007-08 Great Allegheny Passage Economic Impact Study. The 18-month study of trail-related spending along the 132-mile Great Allegheny Passage found that over \$40 million in annual direct spending and another \$7.5 million in wages were attributed to the Great Allegheny Passage in 2008.

Here’s what key partners and US Congressmen have said about the trail’s impact:

Congressman John P.  
Murtha (PA-12)

“The recreational and economic impact that biking and hiking trails have on our region is overlooked and understated. When we started converting former rail lines into trail networks more than 30 years ago, none of us had any idea how successful they would be. The partnership created by government, non-profit, heritage and conservation groups has worked to provide limitless tourism and recreational opportunities throughout western Pennsylvania. And in so doing, we are transforming a symbol of our industrial past into a symbol of our future.

Congressman Tim  
Murphy (PA-18)

“The Great Allegheny Passage provides the opportunity for residents of Southwestern Pennsylvania to bike, hike, cross-country ski, and participate in other outdoor activities in a safe environment. The trail promotes the natural beauty of the region and has proven to have a significant economic impact.”

Congressman Bill  
Shuster (PA-09)

"The \$40 million in annual spending and \$7.5 million in wages found in this report is a testament to the amazing potential the Great Allegheny Passage has to generate significant investment into the region. The impact of recreation and tourism creating opportunities for small businesses throughout the Passage cannot be overstated. The Passage is a well tuned engine of economic activity and this report will only help speed along future growth, opportunity and investment to benefit our communities."

Cathy McCollom, Trail Town  
Program Director

"The Great Allegheny Passage clearly is a significant economic engine. Its impact on this area continues to grow and we anticipate it will do so for many years to come. The builders of this nationally-recognized trail promised an economic outcome and the study reveals a delivery on that promise."

Linda McKenna Boxx,  
Allegheny Trail Alliance President

"The economic impact of the trail in 2001 was estimated at \$7.26 million in direct spending compared to \$40 million in 2008. Of course, in 2001 the Great Allegheny Passage was a series of shorter trail segments not yet connected to each other or to the C&O Canal Towpath. The trail, which now connects the Pittsburgh region to Washington, D.C., has become a national and international destination that hosts an estimated 750,000 trips annually. We're pleased with the study's results, but certainly are not surprised. Spend an afternoon on the trail and you'll quickly see that it's being traveled by cyclists from near and far."

Donna Gambol, Laurel Highlands  
Visitors Bureau Executive Director

"The overall economic impact of the Great Allegheny Passage cannot be overstated. Our trail towns have experienced a renaissance as new businesses, homeowners, and visitors have contributed to their revival. We are excited about what future growth will occur here in the Laurel Highlands as more and more people throughout the United States learn about this extraordinary and wonderful corridor connecting Washington, DC to McKeesport, and then to Pittsburgh and beyond."

## About the Great Allegheny Passage Economic Impact Study

The study analyzed gross revenues attributed to the trail, business decisions influenced by the trail, and trail user demographics. Research was conducted in three phases from February 2008 to August 2009. First, 117 trail businesses from Pittsburgh to Cumberland were surveyed on the trail's economic impact in March 2008. Next, 1,272 trail users were surveyed throughout the 2008 trail season. And finally, 120 trail businesses were surveyed in March 2009, to collect 2008 revenue and wage information and for comparison to the previous year's data.

The study is a project of The Progress Fund's Trail Town Program, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, and the Allegheny Trail Alliance. The organizations contracted with Campos Market Research to complete the study and had research findings reviewed and validated by researchers in the Alex G. McKenna School of Business, Economics, and Government at Saint Vincent College. Over fifty volunteers invested more than 1,000 hours in time surveying and data entry from May through October 2008. Previous studies were conducted in 1998, 2001, and 2006. The full study is available at [www.trailtowns.org](http://www.trailtowns.org) and [www.GAPtrail.org](http://www.GAPtrail.org).

### Key Findings, Business Survey:

- Over \$40 million in annual direct spending and another \$7.5 million in wages are attributed to the Great Allegheny Passage. Estimated direct spending in 2001 was \$7.26 million.

- Business respondents estimated that on average 25% of sales were attributed to the Great Allegheny Passage.

- Over one-quarter of businesses reported expansions or expansion plans within the next year.

### Key Findings, Trail User Survey:

&bull; 35% of overnight visitors earn an annual household income of over \$100,000, compared to just 6% of local trail users earning the same amount.

&bull; Overnight visitors spend an average of \$98 a day in trail communities and on lodging, compared to local trail users spending an average of \$13 each trail use.

&bull; 97% of overnights reported biking as their primary activity while using the trail, versus 88% of all trail users reporting biking as their primary activity.

&bull; The majority of trail users (85%) starts and ends their trips in the same location.

&bull; The majority of trail users (83%) are 35 years of age or older, with the age category of 45-54 being mentioned most often (28%).

&bull; Trail users from 670 unique postal codes were surveyed.

&bull; The most frequently mentioned suggestion in improving the trail was better signage both on and off the trail.

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